



Testimony, Labor Committee, February 17, 2015

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a Legislative Representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 32,000 public and private employees.

**Council 4 opposes SB 108, An Act Concerning the Ability of Arbitration Panels to Compromise When Ruling on Municipal Contract Disputes.**

The current system of municipal binding arbitration has worked well as a dispute resolution mechanism. It has been exhaustively examined and has met the test of time.

This bill would altar the whole dynamic of arbitration. It would introduce great uncertainty into a currently stable process. One question it begs is why would management ever offer more than a zero wage or benefit increase? Would it simply result in arbitrators splitting the difference - if management offered zero and labor 10%, would it then result in a 5% wage increase?

This change would probably lead to a hardening of positions on both the management and labor sides. It also would introduce the prejudices of the arbitrators, rather than relying more solidly on the positions of the two parties in dispute. It could also insinuate regional prejudices. Does what works for Hartford work for New Canaan? An arbitrator on his or her own might think so.

Much of the complaint about the current arbitration process seems to come from rhetoric rather than fact. The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee did its last comprehensive report on municipal binding arbitration in 2006. It found that under MERA, management's last best offer was chosen 57% of the time. This report also stated that arbitration was used in only 4% MERA settlements. That would seem to prove that the current system is meeting its function well.

**Instead of focusing narrowly on a dispute resolution process, we urge you to look at comprehensive revenue reform, including ways to reduce our state's over-reliance on the property tax and the related problems it creates, from under-funding public services to income inequality.**

Council 4 would be happy to provide the committee with any additional information.  
Thank you for your consideration